

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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BOBCAT, SEA OTTER, AND TRUMPETER SWAN TO RETAIN STATUS UNDER ENDANGERED SPECIES TREATY

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reconsidered its original proposal and will now recommend that the bobcat remain on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The Service will also recommend against reducing the listing status of the southern sea otter and the trumpeter swan.

In a notice to be published in the February 14, 1979, Federal Register, the Interior agency acknowledged the controversy generated by its October 5, 1978, proposal to remove the bobcat from coverage under the 47-country treaty but also observed that "very few additional data were received during the comment period."

Although noting that it is still an "open question" whether the bobcat would become threatened with extinction if international trade controls were removed, the Service concluded that "presently available data do not meet the criteria for deletion." The criteria were adopted in 1976 and impose a greater burden of proof for removing a species than for listing one.

The Service also has proposed a temporary change in these standards to allow a species to be removed if it could not qualify for listing. The bobcat falls into this category and the Service said it would reconsider its status if this change is made by the party countries when they meet in Costa Rica on March 19-30, 1979.

On the southern sea otter, the Service said the evidence "did not clearly show whether the species belongs in Appendix I or II" and that it therefore had decided to retain it on Appendix I. The trumpeter swan, originally depleted by trade in its feathers, was omitted by clerical error from the official text of Appendix II. It was included, however, in the U.S. version, which the Service will seek to have adopted.

Other final determinations include transfer of the American alligator to Appendix II, which would allow regulated international commerce under certain conditions in some populations of the species that have been reclassified under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. This reclassification now applies to gators in three Louisiana parishes and the Service has proposed it for those in nine additional parishes in that State. The October 2, 1978, proposal has not become final. Once near extinction, the alligator is now abundant in many areas as a result of conservation measures taken in recent years.

The 1973 Convention regulates the import and export of listed species through a system of permits, granted after a scientific finding that the activity will not be detrimental to the survival of the species. The species are listed in appendices according to the degree of threat, including international commerce. Such commercial trade is prohibited in Appendix I species (threatened with extinction) but it is allowed under controlled conditions in Appendix II species (potentially threatened with extinction).

The Service also proposed removing the Mexican duck from Appendix I, and the marsh hawk, Mearns's quail, kestrel, osprey, and greater prairie chicken from Appendix II. International trade in these species is insignificant and their export is controlled under other laws.

The remaining proposals involve transferring species between Appendix I and Appendix II. Species being proposed for Appendix I status are the Guadalupe fur seal, American crocodile, Bolson tortoise, and the golden eagle population east of the Mississippi River.

Species proposed for Appendix II status include the Atlantic sturgeon, Peale's peregrine falcon (not to be confused with other more threatened subspecies of peregrine falcons), the Alaska population of the bald eagle, and the northern elephant seal. Except for the American alligator, there is little or no international trade in the species being proposed for transfer to Appendix II.

To become effective, the U.S. proposals must be approved by the party countries at Costa Rica.

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